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January 12, 2017

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the Union for Reform Judaism, whose over 900 congregations across North America encompass over 1.5 million Reform Jews, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, which represents over 2,000 Reform rabbis, I strongly urge you to oppose the nomination of Senator Jefferson Beauregard Sessions, III (R-AL) as U.S. Attorney General.

The pursuit of civil rights has been the core of the Reform Jewish Movement's social justice work for over 50 years. Guided by the fundamental principle that all people are created in the Divine image and words of Leviticus 19:18, "love your neighbor as yourself," we have worked to pass landmark legislation that advances the fundamental rights of all people, regardless of race, class, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or national origin. As the chief law enforcement officer in the country, the Attorney General has substantial power over the administration of these policies.

Senator Sessions' longstanding record of insufficient commitment to voting rights, LGBTQ equality, women's rights, immigration reform and religious freedom causes us to believe that he would stand in the way of the Justice Department's mandate to ensure equal protection under the law.

Senator Sessions has called the Voting Rights Act of 1965 "intrusive" and has been accused of using his power as U.S. Attorney to intimidate activists who were registering black voters in Alabama.<sup>1</sup> He vocally opposed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act when it was added as an amendment to the 2008 Defense Authorization Act because it added sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of federally protected classes in hate crimes prevention and prosecution.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Senator Sessions joined 21 other senators to vote against the 2012 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, which included new protections for immigrants and LGBTQ people.<sup>3</sup> Finally, he staked out positions that put him far outside the mainstream as the Senate considered and passed comprehensive immigration reform legislation in 2013.<sup>4</sup>

We did not come to these conclusions lightly. It was our hope that during his confirmation hearing Senator Sessions would address the concerns his long record in public life has raised. Unfortunately, Senator Sessions' responses to questioning reaffirmed many of his most troubling positions, including his support for a religious test for entrance to the United States.<sup>5</sup> The United States was founded on the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thenation.com/article/jeff-sessions-trumps-pick-for-attorney-general-is-a-fierce-opponent-of-civil-rights/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sessions.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/floor-statements?ID=a8247be2-d851-bebf-9a8a-02a497fd6f1b>

<sup>3</sup> <https://qz.com/841443/jeff-sessions-womens-rights-record/>

<sup>4</sup> [http://abcnews.go.com/ABC\\_Univision/jeff-sessions-good-day-immigration-hearing/story?id=19176554](http://abcnews.go.com/ABC_Univision/jeff-sessions-good-day-immigration-hearing/story?id=19176554),

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/jeff-sessions-muslim-ban\\_us\\_58750b0ee4b02b5f858b3305](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/jeff-sessions-muslim-ban_us_58750b0ee4b02b5f858b3305)



principle of religious freedom and as a safe haven for those fleeing persecution and hardship. Our chief law enforcement officer cannot lead our country down the path of renegeing on a core aspect of our legacy.

The Attorney General must be an individual whose record and words make clear that he or she is committed to protecting voting rights, prosecuting hate crimes, seeking justice for victims of domestic violence and supervising immigration courts. Regretfully, Senator Sessions record and words send the opposite message. Confirming his appointment risks leaving American citizens without the civil rights protections and fundamental freedoms they have been granted under the law and the Constitution.

I urge you to oppose Senator Sessions' nomination and to vote against his confirmation on the Senate floor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jonah D. Pesner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner

Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism